

CITY OF HOLTVILLE

State of the City Address – 2019

Honorable members of the City Council, city officials, staff, citizens and friends of the City of Holtville - welcome to City Hall this evening and congratulations on another successful year in our wonderful town! We come together tonight as we near the end of our fiscal calendar to discuss our recent accomplishments, current state of affairs and plans for the future.

Let me first thank my fellow Councilperson, Mike Goodsell, for giving the invocation tonight. Mike is a deeply religious man and frequently gives our invocations at City Council meetings. I work with Mike on the Council, but I also know him from the Trinity Baptist Church. As a very faith-centric community, Holtville probably has the highest number of churches per capita in the Imperial Valley. Many of our people rely heavily on the support and friendship we receive from other members of our congregations and our churches become central facets in our lives.

As I stated earlier, tonight I will recap some of the recent successes for Holtville. Perhaps the most visible accomplishment recently has been improvement to our streets. For the better part of the last decade, the City Council has planned for and positioned

the City to undertake a major repair and maintenance project to lengthen the useful life of our street system. Utilizing funds solely designated for transportation projects, we were able to patch and topcoat most all of the approximately 18 miles of streets in the City. Of the streets that were not completed a few months ago, most are targeted for more extensive repairs that will begin in the next few weeks. More “one-off” projects will crop up over the next few years, and we will do some extensive maintenance to further prolong the life of these streets, but things are in a good spot on Holtville streets for at least the next decade!

As always, we thank the dedicated staff of the City of Holtville. Here, more than in most places, our employees are asked to commit to going the extra mile. Our Parks worker Jesus Luna shows up to help after hours on almost every water break, the Public Works Foreman Alex Chavez has pulled over on weekends in his street clothes to shut off water valves after hydrants or sprinklers were hit and produced geysers in town. Our Finance Supervisor Kariza Preciado has been serving as the City Clerk and the City’s representative for the Census 2020 planning in addition to all of her other duties. Job descriptions here are just a starting spot, but our staff meet the extra challenges every day.

Tonight we will move a step closer to passing the 2019-20 City Budget. Through conservative policies in spending, hiring and

future commitments, the City has a marginal surplus budgeted in both the General Fund and the Sewer Fund. Although there is work to be done to keep the Water Enterprise running in the black, overall the City is on sound financial footing and building its reserves for any future contingencies.

Last year, former Mayor Richard Layton spoke to you on this occasion focusing on the accomplishments of the previous 10 years. So I hope it is fitting then, that I speak to you a bit about the vision the Council has for the NEXT 10 years. With continued development and expansion of the City's current facilities, we hope to see some measured growth to keep Holtville sustainable.

There are currently multiple projects planned within the City that may bring some new residents to Holtville. The Fern Crossing Apartments that will be built north of Fourth Street between Fern and Holt Avenues are in the final stages of planning and should be under construction in a few months. The Torres Complex, which will include a new Cuchi's Raspados and some apartments is fully approved and ready to start construction as well. Additional units have been proposed for a complex on Melon and Ninth that is currently in the environmental review stage.

That growth is important to the future of our community. We are often asked by residents why we can't get a Jack in the Box or

a grocery store in town. Most of those franchises require a minimum population of 10,000 residents to consider a store. With some marginal growth such as the previously-mentioned projects and attracting future development, that number may be in reach, if not for the City limits, at least for the 92250 zip code, which may be able to move those conversations forward.

With that said, the City is already working diligently to assist in the outreach for Census 2020. It is important on so many levels for every resident of Holtville to be counted. From sales tax allocation to grant funding to transportation funding to the aforementioned ability to attract retail development, it can only help us to increase the number of recognized citizens here. In the coming months, we will be working with the County of Imperial and the Census Bureau to reach out to residents and prepare them for the count next spring. Please, participate and be counted!

As we look to the future, the City Council has worked with consultants and staff to prepare the City for that anticipated growth. The last decade has brought modernization and increased capacity to both our Water and Sewer Treatment facilities. We have worked to add amenities such as the Mellinger Alamo River Trail and the Skate Park.

We will continue with those types of projects. Soon we will begin a project to modernize the electronic controls in our Water Plant and we look forward to the completion of a \$3 million Wetlands project to be constructed just west of town. Eventually, the Trail will extend to the Wetlands, giving residents an even longer trail system to see the many natural wonders our Imperial Valley has to offer.

The Parks in Holtville are already some of the best in the Valley and we are working to further improve them. Working alongside the Little League at Mack Park, we look forward to a second field there soon. The Holtville Unified School District will be improving some facilities over the next few years and we hope to continue to enjoy the benefits of joint use of some of those facilities for our citizens.

Perhaps no project is nearer and dearer to the hearts of the City Council than the proposed Public Safety Building. That project was conceived and discussed over many years, with plans being drawn up over a decade ago. Economic changes put the project on hold shortly after the architectural plans were completed. Even though it has never been fully abandoned, the construction cost has been prohibitive. With an eye on grant funding and alternative funding sources, City Council has given the staff renewed directive to search for financing to complete the project. When complete,

the building will create a better facility for both Fire and law enforcement, which helps keep our community safe. In the long term, there will also be a community center and additional recreational facilities for the public.

Throughout accomplishing the goals and objectives we have completed, those that we are working on today and those that we are hoping for in the future, the Council remains intent on retaining the small town “community” feel of Holtville and the traditional values that we have shared over the years. We hope that no matter if or how Holtville grows, we continue to be the close-knit community we have always been. We hope that values like being tied closely to our churches and congregations never go out of style. We hope that Holtville continues to be great, even as we work to get even better!